

A Man Named John

by Dearing

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Summary: Spartans can't love. That's what they told me. Maybe they're just good at hiding it. MirandaJohn.

1. Miranda

Okay, first ever Halo fic from me. Wow, what a landmark.

First off, like I say, this is a first attempt at writing Halo. As such, canon is sketchy at best. I've done my best, trying to keep characters away from being too OOC, but I think I slipped up here and there, and as for timeline...well, I'd like to say it's set during Halo 3 (a part of it was inspired by Starry Night), but seeing as I have no real info other than what I see in trailers and such, it's kind of hard to place (Mind you, being fan fiction it doesn't have to be completely canon anyway right?). As such, I'd kinda appreciate no comments about canonicity and the like, or flames for that matter. Constructive criticism is always appreciated though.

Anyway, read on, and I hope you enjoy.

* * *

>Spartans can't love.<p><p>

That little titbit of information, courtesy of Cortana, surprised me.

And I remember, as I watched him and a dozen or so shock troopers drop to the surface of the second Halo (it feels like eons ago), that it saddened me too.

This warâ€¦it's coming to an end. One way or another, I can just feel it in the air, whether that's the starch conditioned air of In Amber Clad's Bridge, or here, on this Pelican, breathing in the dry, sandy

atmosphere of the African plains as we fly off to God knows where. There's just a sense of the end is near. I don't know if that's good or bad for us, but it's definitely there. You can see it in every soldier's eyes, be him (or her) UNSC or Covenant. They're tired, we're all tired, we all just want this war to end. Even the Elites, confused and betrayed as they are.

But we keep fighting, because we don't want the other side to win.

And so as I sit here, in the back of this drop ship waiting for the next chapter of this ongoing saga, I can't help but wonder what will happen if we win.

What will happen to people likeâ€¦John?

John. Simple and easy to remember. A bit like him really.

I smile slightly as I let my eyes drift over to where he stands near the open hatch, one hand steady on the side of the craft as he watches the world flash past beneath us. It took me a minute to realise who Cortana was talking about in her reports about the destruction of the first Halo. I just kept seeing John 117. It was only after reading through Johnson's (who refers to him as Master Chief) did I make the connection.

Sometimes I wonder exactly how close that AI is to this man.

I'm kinda drifting from my point here.

I often wonder what will become of the Spartans if we win this war. Earth is a united front, has been for years, even before the Covenant glassed Harvest.

People like me, officers and marines of UNSC, we have a future ifâ€¦and whenâ€¦we win the war. Humanity will always need captains and crew for their ships, and marines will always be needed just to make sure things stay peaceful in the colonies.

But for Spartans, it's a different story.

They are a race of warriors, bred for war and nothing else.

They don't break easily, they seem ever calm and resilient, and some even say they never feel a thing, not even pain.

Of course the Master Chief is the only example of a Spartan II I have ever known properly, and even many of his aspects are still a mystery to me. Like what does he look like? I wonder if my father knew?

I'm straying again.

My point is, all people like John know is how to fight, and as hard as I try, I just can't see him in a setting of peace. Sure, there may be a few rebel cells he can take care of, but it will be nothing compared to this war.

I can't really speak from experience, but if it were me, I think that might drive me insane.

Then another thought hits me: what if he's just put on ice? Just shoved into a cryo-chamber until some other enemy decides to rear it's ugly head? Would they really do that? Would they really treat men and women who are humanity's heroes like that? Just putting them away until they become useful again, like tools?

They may not be upgraded with all kinds of cybertronics and what not, but they're still human.

"Commander?"

His even voice pulls me out of my thoughts, a part of my realising I've been staring at him for the past five minutes, my embarrassed features reflected in his gold face plate.

"With your permission, I'm heading out,"

It took me a minute to realise the Pelican currently hovered near the remains of Old Mombassa, one of the Marines shoving out a Mongoose onto the dirt as I stand to give him a proper goodbye, a mild irritation as I have at having to look up at him to (hopefully) meet his eyes.

"Very good Chief," my voice sounds so formal in my ears over the sound of the Pelican's engines, "I hope you trust the Arbiter to do his part,"

The Spartan did an impression of a half shrug, "Trust has nothing to do with it. We need each other for this to work. That's the only reason why we're here,"

I felt the corner of my lips tug upwards slightly at his bluntness. We stared at each other from across the blood tray as the marines made sure the area was secure, it taking me a moment to realise it was just the two of us in that cramped bay.

"With your permission," he seemed to be feeling uncomfortable under my gaze, "I'd like to get underway,"

"Just a minute," I took a few steps closer to him, if anything so I wouldn't have to shout over the engines, "I was wondering Chief, if we win this warâ€¦"

"When,"

I couldn't help but smile. It was very rare for a Spartan to correct a superior. Was he really so at ease with me?

"When," I coincided, "When we win this warâ€¦do you know what you're going to do?"

"Do?"

"Yes you knowâ€¦" I gave him a helpless expression, not really sure how to explain it, "What will youâ€¦do with your life?"

John paused, his head bowed slightly, as though in thought.

"I don't know," his voice was surprisingly quiet, yet I could still hear it over the noise of battle, "I've never really thought about

it. All I know is how to fight," he looked up at me, "I'd always thought I'd go down fighting,"

I give him a sympathetic smile as I try to pat him good naturedly on the shoulder, then thinking better of it and settling for his upper arm, due to my height.

"When this is all over, I'm going to help you find something to do that doesn't include anything along the lines of a SMG, you have my word,"

The statement seems to surprise him (even under MJOLNIR armour, I can still feel his arm tense up under my hand), it certainly surprised me. It was like a sudden snap decision, heat of the moment, that sort of thing, a decision that would properly change my life if I went through with it, but a decision that made me feel good on the inside.

Helping this man, who Johnson said my father held in high regard, seemed the right thing to do.

"If I survive,"

I quirked an eyebrow at this with an amused smirk. I figured he might say something like that.

"Oh you will,"

"How can you be sure?"

"Because you will. You're that kind of man,"

He seems to regard me quietly, although it's hard to tell with that faceplate in the way.

"Iâ€¦would appreciate that Commander,"

I smile again as he turns to gaze out towards the approaching storm, nodding to one of the marines as he gives the signal that the area is secure.

"John,"

He turns back to me as his name escapes my lips, that uncanny feeling that he is surprised washing over me as I step up to him, my mind not completely sure of what my body is doing.

Slowly but surely, my hands reach up and grasp either side of his helmet firmly, a hint of amusement gracing my mind as he hesitantly stoops heavily as my limbs guide his head towards me.

And there, in front Johnson, a dozen marines, and maybe any Covenant that might be hiding under our nose, I kiss him.

It's not particularly romantic, pressing my lips to the top of his face plate, neither does it taste very nice; a sort of metallic tang mixed in with the grit of the area, but as I step back, I have a feeling that it was the right thing to do sweep over me, not to mention some amusement at the thought of him going crossed eyed trying to see if I'd left a mark on his plate.

"Good luck Master Chief," I smile again with nod, "Come back alive, understand?"

He seems to shake himself out of his reverie, standing once more to his full height with a nod.

"Yes Ma'am,"

Then he jumps out of the hatch, mounts his vehicle, and drives away towards the storm, a trail of dust his only wake.

I sigh as I watch him disappear, before sliding back into my seat as the marines file in.

For the first time in a long while, I actually feel at ease, calm, ready to face anything, and even positive that we will win this war.

For as the Pelican takes to the skies once more, and I ignore the amused (and bemused) looks Johnson and his Marines give me and each other, I know I have a purpose, other than that of commanding ships and men, once the fighting stops:

To help a man named Johnâ€¦regain his humanity.

2. John

If I could be perfectly honest, I didn't expect a lot of people to like this, and if I want to be even more honest, this was originally going to be a simple oneshot.

But, seeing as people actually like it, I'm going to try and continue it.

> Seeing as I got Halo 3 yesterday, I've played through the first few levels, and I've decided to make this fic a bit
AU.<p>

WARNING!!!!SPOILERS!!!! IF YOU HAVEN'T PLAYED THROUGH THE FIRST FEW LEVELS YET (Which let's face it is unlikely but just in case) DON'T READ THIS NEXT BIT!!! JUST MOVE ON TO THE STORY!!!

Anyway, I've decided that the previous chapter and this one both take place on Tsavo Highway, only rather than Master Cheif falling down the maintenance elevator at the end of Crow's Nest, he's picked up by Miranda and from the hanger and then sets off down the highway to clear it of Covenant for Marine ground forces (Or something like that.)

I probably won't update again until I've finished Halo 3, so I know what I have to work with, but in the meantime, enjoy this new chapter, this time taken from John's perspective.

* * *

><p><p>

****JOHN****

"I don't want to do this," I stared uneasily at the door up the path, "I _really_ don't want to do this,"

"'Course you don't. No one ever does," Johnson gave me a grim smile as he straightened out his uniform, "But Chief, you were the last man to see the Captain alive. I think he'd appreciate it if you were the one to give her the bad news. So stop whining like a baby and get a move on. And I thought I told you to wear something nice!"

I glared darkly down at my comrade through the gold face plate of my helmet as he slapped me heavily on the back, my eyes slowly turning to the thin fabric that was neatly folded between my armoured fingers.

A flag of the UNSC.

Captain Jacob Keyes was dead. First absorbed by the Flood, then had his head punched in my yours truly.

After that, how was I ever going to face his daughter.

Commander Miranda Keyes was a woman I knew from reputation only. From what I had heard, she had the same fiery spirit that she had inherited from her father, and had not let his reputation overshadow hers.

The Captain of the _In Amber Clad_, she led her troops through thick and thin, and according to Johnson: "Ain't never had a wolf whistle throughout her career,"

And now she sat (Probably) behind this door a few steps in front of me, on this ordinary London street, without any idea of the grim news I was about to deliver.

Escaping Alpha Halo's destruction was a walk in the park compared to this.

"Why don't you give it too her?" I roughly shoved the flag up against Johnson's chest, "I'm not good at this sort of thing. You tell her about her father. I'll just stand here and lookâ€¦imposing,"

"More like an idiot," the Sergeant pushed the flag back to me, "Chief, stop being such a baby about this. All you have to do is walk up to her door, give her the flag and tell her what a great man her dad was. Captain Keyes is about to become a big shot war hero, what with that Colonial Cross he's about to getâ€¦you knowâ€¦posthumousâ€¦and I think dear Miss Miranda would rather have _you_ tell her why she's missing a relative rather than have it sprung on her when she arrives at the award ceremony next week. You saw him last. You should have the honour,"

"I punched his head in to take his neural implant," I scowled darkly at the man beside me, "How exactly would you convey that to her?"

Johnson merely smiled as he reached up to pat me good naturedly on the shoulder, "Tell her he diedâ€¦honourably. Now get down there and get it over with before the neighbours start wondering why a Spartan

and a devilishly handsome marine are arguing in the middle of the street!"

A rather hefty shove finally got my feet walking down the neat path towards the pristine white door in front of me, the feeling that something bad was about to happen settling firmly in my gut as I stared at my own reflection in the bronze number seven that sat perfectly centred on the pale wood.

With a certain hesitancy that just didn't feel natural to me, I slowly raised my fist until it was level with the number, letting three heavy thumps echo through the house beyond as I knocked, before letting the hand fall limply to my side.

For a moment, there is only silence. Nothing but the sound of wind through the clean garden's grass, and perhaps the faint rustle of lace curtains as an old woman across the street peers curiously out of her window to get a better view.

After what felt like an eternity, the sound of light footsteps coming down stairs reaches my helmet's receivers, my eyes subconsciously going over what little of my armour I can see before the door opens to just a crack.

Through the dimness of the hallway beyond, a green eye peaks over a golden chain preventing the door from moving any further, the orb widening as it slowly travels up to my faceplate, before disappearing as the door shut once more.

The rattling of tiny shackles was only audible for the most briefest of moments before the door slowly opened wide, allowing me my first proper look at Miranda Keyes.

She seemed incredibly average. Average height, average build, even average haircut. In retrospect however, I do tend to find woman to be average whatever they look like.

As part of Spartan II augmentation procedures, I remember Doctor Halsey's report saying that the catalytic thyroid implant forced into my neck, while increasing skeletal and muscle tissue, also represses my sex drive. Kelly always joked that it was to stop Spartans getting lonely when out on long missions, but the end result was that in terms of romantic attachment, all females seemed exactly alike.

At least, that's what my mind told me.

And yet as I stared down at this woman in front of me, I felt strange.

"You're a Spartan, aren't you?"

Her clipped yet easy voice brought me out of my thoughts, pure instinct suddenly kicking in as I came to attention at the realisation I was in the presence of a superior officer.

"Yes Ma'am, I am,"

> A light laugh seemed to float up to me as she leaned against the doorway, those amused green eyes feeling like they were trying to burn my face plate away with a stare.<p>

"At ease soldier, I'm not on duty. No need to stand on ceremony,"

The light tone in her voice made the strange feeling in my gut increase tenfold as I slowly let my posture slump, before I finally allowed myself to take a second look the daughter of my late commander.

To say that it felt strange to be standing outside the home of a superior would be an understatement, but to stand here on the doorstep of a superior when said officer was out of uniform felt far stranger than anything else I had ever felt before.

Leaning there against her doorway in jeans and a simple black T-shirt, I can safely say that I had never felt so out of place in my life.

"So," The Commander's eyes seem to slowly take in my armoured form as we stood quietly on her doorstep, her mouth creasing into a sad frown as her green orbs lingered on the flag in my hand, "Do what do I owe the pleasure of a Spartan-II on my doorstep in the middle of my vacation time?"

I gazed down at her quietly, trying to think of how to break the news to her. I definitely wasn't good at this kind of thing.

"Commander Miranda Keyes," my voice sounded hollow, even over my helmet's receivers, "I am Spartan 117 andâ€¦" I hesitantly held out the folded flag to her, "I am sorry to inform you thatâ€¦your father has been killed in action,"

Keyes stared down at the folded cloth, her face betraying no signs of emotion as she stared at the mostly white fabric in my armoured hand.

Another tense silence followed, and I found myself praying that she would just take the flag, or slam the door in my face, or do something that would bring this encounter to an end.

When she finally brought her eyes up to meet my own (Almost), the words that escaped her mouth surprised me more than any Covenant attack ever would.

"Will you come inside?"

She turned around before I could answer, leaving me standing there, my arm still stretched out, flag in hand. I turned to look over my shoulder at Johnson, my helpless expression masked by my faceplate, only to see the grinning sergeant motioning towards the door, egging me on.

Turning back to the doorway, I slowly stepped through the doorway and into the hall beyond, a part of me remembering to close the door behind me.

* * *

>If I had looked out of place in Commander Keyes' garden, then I must of looked even more so here, stooped awkwardly in her living room.<p><p>

Considering I've spent most of my life living in barracks and cryo tubes, the simple normality of the small room was completely lost on me.

A pair of mismatched chairs sat on either side of a large sofa in a large semi-circle around the cold fireplace, various books and magazines sprawled across the coffee table and shelves that lined the room's walls.

Across the mantle, several small pictures stood propped up in small golden frames, each one showing the smiling face of three people that looked fairly familiar.

The only man in any of the photographs was obviously Captain Keyes. Even in the older images, with his hair that same onyx of his daughter's, I could still see the way he held himself with dignity, that same pipe with the peculiar mark almost constantly in one hand.

His daughter seemed to be in a lot of the photographs as well, her age ranging from one where she appeared to have just taken command of In Amber Clad, to one where she appeared to be only six years old, learning to ride a bike with her father.

The last person in these pictures however, was a total stranger to me.

She vaguely reminded me of the Commander, only older, and there was only one picture of her; standing with her husband and daughter, smiling happily in a perfect moment captured for the rest of time.

Her face was the same sort of shape as her daughter's, and her eyes were that same emerald green, but her hair seemed to be a dark blond that fell about her shoulders, like a waterfall of golden water framing her face.

"My mother," I didn't jump as the youngest Keyes came up beside me, a mug of coffee in her hands, I merely inclined my head to look to her as she stared at the photograph, "This was taken a few years back, just after I'd graduated from the Academy," She smiled lightly, "She was always smiling, always happy," the smile faded slightly, "But I always knew it was a façade. Deep down, she was terrified whenever my father or I went off into battle. She just kept smiling, in case she would never see us again, and the last thing we would remember of her was her happy face,"

"Where is she now?"

"Dead," A crack in her voice distorted the word slightly, "She was killed in the glassing of Jericho a few years back. She was a nurse you see. She thought it was a nice safe job, always helping and coming in after the fighting. But"

Her voice trailed off as she took a sip of her coffee. A part of me felt she was merely trying to hide the fact her voice seemed to of failed her.

"I'm sorry," It was the only thing I could think to say.

"It's alright," She looked up at me with a grateful smile, "Wellâ€|actually it's not alright, but it's not your fault, and there's nothing you can really do,"

She looked down at my hand, the flag still held tightly in it's grasp, before setting the coffee down on the table and gently removing the thin fabric from my hand.

"I don't have any brothers or sisters," she rubbed her thumb lightly over the cloth, "I have no cousins, or Uncles and Aunts," She looked up at me again, her face surprisingly resigned, "I'm the last of the Keyes. The last of my line. When I die, my family is going to be forgotten by history,"

Then, something happened.

Something stirred within me as we locked eyes, something that I had never felt before.

Very slowly, I felt my body turn towards her, as though I wasn't fully in control, my hands rising to fall onto her shoulders as gently as I could.

"I couldn't save your father," my voice seemed to hold that same hollowness from before, "He died honourably, fighting to the end. Butâ€|if you will allow Ma'amâ€|I will insure thatâ€|your family will never become lost to time,"

She stared up at me, not even bothering to hide her surprise, before she smiled gratefully, nodding her thanks with silence.

And thenâ€|someone screamed.

* * *

>I stifled a groan as I spat out the sand and grit of the African plains, my hands shaking slightly as I tried to stand up straight.<p><p>

My helmet had come loose, the green object looking out of place as it seemed to stare me on it's side.

Stumbling to my feet, I squinted through the bright light as I thought back to that day, the day I first met Miranda Keyes, the day I first began to feel strange around her.

I never told anyone about what I had told her in her Living Room, and neither did I tell anyone about this strange feeling either.

All I knew was that I felt an urge to protect her, to insure she would never fall. Even back at the makeshift base, I had felt unsure of just leaving her alone, even under Johnson's assurances of her safety.

Even now as I surveyed the wreckage of the Mongoose, I still feel as though I should of stayed with her.

But we all have to follow orders, even the ones we don't like.

With the hiss of the seal, I ready myself for combat once more as I strap my rifle to my back, listening to background chatter as I watch incoming mortars sail through the air.

—

"Any sign of the Chief?"

"Negative sir, I think we lost him,"

—

I allow myself a small smile as I fish a bubble shield from my belt. I fell from two kilometres and lived and they think some mortars gonna finish me off?

"Not yet,"

I throw the device to the ground, the shield enveloping me moments before the explosion sends the surrounding earth and remains of the mongoose in all directions.

I barely let the debris die down before I'm running once more into the fray, rifle ready as I jump once more into the fight, determined to finish this fight, and get back to a woman named Miranda Keyes—so she can fulfil her promise to me.

* * *

><p><p>

I know it's not as long as the first one, but I'm still pleased with it. I just hope Master Cheif wasn't too OOC (It's hard to write about a character who barely says anything)

Anyway, hoped you enjoyed it. Reviews and constructive criticism always welcome.

Thanks,

Dearing

3. Miranda II

I'm actually wondering what people are going to think of this chapter. Got a few new OCs in here, two mentioned and one you actually see. I should warn you...he's not what you'd really expect, but he has a reason for it. Read the not at the bottom for more info.

Enjoy

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* * *

>

MIRANDA

I'm not jealous.

I refuse to even consider it.

I cannot be jealous of a computer program.

And yet, as I hover over this snow covered land, on this alien installation, being careful to avoid scarabs as they fall from the sky, I'm ashamed to find my mind focusing on a far less important question than the matter at hand:

What does that AI Have that I don't?

I'm not jealous. I am furious with myself that my irritated mind was even thinking about it, especially when the gunner in the back is counting on me not to get us killed by that annoyingly powerful beam weapon mounted on the front.

I realise I can't help it though. I'm worried about him.

Somewhere, down below, a man I promised to help after the war is fighting amidst a entire army while trying not to get stepped on. I don't want him to die, but I don't want to lose him to a series of electrical impulses either.

It sounds so stupid when I think about it.

I will admit, Cortana is attractive. Not attractive to me, but certainly attractive enough to get more than one fresh-out-of-the-academy ensign to walk into a bulkhead while staring if Johnson's stories are anything to go by. I guess it doesn't help that she looks like she's naked either. I've seen male AI's with a similar virtual avatar before, like Malcolm of the Door To The Stars. Never heard any stories about him turning any heads though. Maybe it's because he was never programmed with a

I think I'm straying a bit here.

My point is, Cortana is a Smart AI, and like all other AIs, she's just a computer program. One, I am sad to say, may very well die soon.

Even if we do get to her in time.

Peering over the edge of the cockpit canopy, I strain my eyes as I think I see a glint of MJOLNIR green against the snow, running at full pace towards an on coming ghost, a small smile gracing my lips as I see the crumpled grey form of some poor grunt go flying across the frosted land as his stolen vehicle takes off towards one of the scarabs.

I often wonder what John would do if he found Cortana too late.

I'll never the sound of his voice when he realised all he'd recovered from that Flood infested cruiser near Voi was a message. He sounded so sad, so despondent. Emotion is something he tends to keep out of his voice, and even now, a full day after we set out here, that tone echoes through my mind.

I wanted to change it. I had too.

So I stood up for him.

I felt completely torn.

On the one hand, Earth, now partially glassed, may still have Flood that escaped the glassing of Voi. I won't even think about the remaining Covenant forces that got left behind.

But on the other is this Spartan, a man who puts so much faith in a program that everyone knows was beginning to show signs of Rampancy, even before all this business with halos and forerunners began.

My military side screamed at me to be silent. To follow Lord Hood's orders to the letter. Our homeworld was in danger, and I was sworn to protect it.

But my human side told me to stand by John, this man, who promised me that my bloodline would continue, a man I cared about deeply, even though I had never seen his face.

So I made a choice.

The right one, even if he feels nothing for me.

Which is always most likely, given what we've made him to be.

The perfect soldier.

"Daydreaming again are we?"

I scowl darkly as I steady the pelican as a amused voice causes me to jump, my dark eyes glowering up into the gold faceplate of a much older MJOLNIR helmet as my supposed gunner seems to stare into my very heart from his position at the door.

Spartan Petty Officer Third Class Daniel-068 is something of a black sheep amongst his fellow brethren, and something of an enigma to me.

Unlike his brothers and sisters, he's been known to disobey direct orders from anyone he doesn't like, and isn't very good at hiding his feelings either, ready to voice his dislike of a mission objective or a superior officer to his or her (usually his) face without even batting an eye.

As such, from what I've heard, while many Spartans spent the last twenty seven years protecting Earth and her colonies from the Covenant and other nasty things the galaxy likes to throw at us, Daniel has spent most of his time inside a cryo-tube, which might explain why at forty two he has the complexion of twenty-five year old.

His area of expertise is short range weaponry like the shotgun, not really useful unless you plan to go into heavy Flood infested areas these days, which may be another reason for his extended time on ice.

He seems to hold a resentment for the UNSC for some reason, something

to do with his drafting into the Spartan-II project, but I'm not certain, and I don't really want to ask about such an obviously touchy area

What I do know is that prior to my father's contact with the first Halo, he had been listed as MIA after the battle of Reach, only to appear several days before John in a forerunner ship, with a monitor of all things as his companion.

Sixteen-eight-zero-seven Charlatan Forge is the female voiced Monitor of Installation 06, and far more of a ditz than the nutcase her brother Spark appears to be. The only time that green eyed orb is seen without 068 is when she's hacking computers with Spark, something they've been doing a lot since we reach The Ark.

Due to his long absence however, this Spartan wears Mark V armour rather than John's Mark VI.

I guess I should be grateful, seeing as when they're both silent, I probably wouldn't be able to tell the difference.

"I thought I told you to man the rear gun," I give him an angry glare over my shoulder as he eases himself into the chair behind me

"You did," his voice cracks slightly as the hiss of air signals the breaking of his helmet's pressure seal, "But it's kinda hard to shoot stuff when that last hit took out your weapon,"

"Oh," a pang of guilt runs through my blood as I look up into his unmasked face, my eyes taking in his dark blond hair, just that little bit over regulation length, pale features, and dark oceanic blue eyes as he gazes nonchalantly over the tactical interface in front of him, hooking a small tactical display headset over his ear, "Sorry,"

"I don't want to tell you your job Ma'am, but you really should focus on the job at hand,"

The guilt quickly fades and is replaced once more with anger as I return my gaze stonily ahead as he primes the Pelican's missile salvos.

"You didn't have to come you know. You'd probably been of a lot more help to John or the Arbiter,"

"I wasn't aware you were on first name terms with John,"

My blood turns cold at the lazy tone of voice, my wide eyes turning back slowly to lock with his as he gazes down at me with a cold smile.

"What are you suggesting Spartan?" My eyes narrow at him darkly, "Can't a superior officer refer to a man under her command by his first name? Maybe I don't like calling him Chief all the time,"

"But undermining is it?" Daniel chuckled to himself as his own orbs dart across the targeting system a few inches in front of his iris, "I suppose I can see the logic behind that. Calling him The Chief all the time sounds kind of superior to Commander doesn't it?"

The pelican rocked as her salvo of Anvil missiles spewed forth from their launchers towards the rear, the giant purple machine screaming out as though in pain as it's legs begin to buckle under the weight as it's power core was hit.

"What I call him and what other people decide to call him isn't your concern," There are times when I really hate this man. His lax attitude gave good honest Spartans like John a bad name, and the risks he like to take, like that stunt he just pulled that could of hurt the dozen odd marines that currently circled the now dying scarab, disgusted me. How he ever even got into the program was beyond me.

For a moment, silence reigned in the cockpit, the only sounds coming from the hum of machinery and the sudden detonation of the scarab below.

It was only when I turned back to the battle at hand though, that his noticeably softer voice dropped a bombshell larger then anything a Halo could produce.

"I can see why he likes you,"

The Pelican almost crashed.

"You know, I often hear people ask what Spartans really fight for," I didn't need to turn around to know is eyes were trying to burn a hole through the back of my skull, "I mean, when you ask someone, anyone, most will say we fight for the defence of humanity. The protection of our blue world and her colonies and the like. The more bloody-minded say we fight for revenge for every planet the Covenant have glassed. Some even say we fight because we're simply cold blooded killing machines. No one ever thinks to ask a Spartan why he or she fights,"

There was a shift of armour as 068 shifted from his seat, coming behind my chair, his head so close to my ear I could feel his breath tickle against my neck as I felt his heavy hand on my shoulder. I could see him staring at me now, his eyes serious and set, his features ever calm as I continued to stare at the on going battle below.

When he spoke, his voice was completely calm, a image of an early foggy morning, with dew still covering the grass coming to mind, "So, the question remains, what _does_ a Spartan fight for? Is it humanity? No. Earth perhaps? No. Surely the UNSC? Try again. Say what you will about us, but vengeance is not something we tally in, and if we had been given the chance, I very much doubt that any of us would kill just for the fun of it. So why do we fight then? Do you want to know the secret?"

I felt a breath catch in my throat as he leaned in close to my ear, a chill going down my spine as his voice is lowered to barely a whisper.

"We fight for each other,"

My eyes widened as he stood up straight in the cockpit, our eyes locking as the sounds of battle seem strangely quiet in my ears.

"When the Spartan-II first began, there were a hundred and fifty of us. By the end of training, there were only thirty three, and now, from what I know, me and John could very well be the last two. If there was one thing we learned, it's that in the long run, the only people we can rely on is each other. Oh we make friends with Marines, and occasionally our superiors, but there were just friends and acquaintances. Only a Spartan can truly understand a Spartan. When others look at us, they only see that," he indicated to his helmet, lying discarded by the Co-pilot console, "They see a faceless, emotionless hero. They see a person that could very well lay down his or her life for the sake of humanity, whose only cause for life is that others can live out their lives like normal people. Now, I'm not saying that we wouldn't, because we would, but believe it or not, A Spartan does feel pain. We can even care for someone, just not in the same way you do. We care for each other, I think some of us may even love each other," he smiled at my raised eyebrow, "We keep it well hidden. We have too. But as our numbers dwindled, we had to find others to fight for. Me, I fight for Kelly-087, be it for her memory or for her spirit, but John—" The Spartan smile grew, "He fights for you. I can safely say he would give his life if it insured yours. To him, you're as much a Spartan as he is—" although granted you're a whole lot shorter," he chuckled as I scowled darkly at him, "My point is, John cares for you. More than a Spartan should for his superior. You are now his driving force in this war. Cortana is cute, I'll grant you that, but John knows the difference between man and machine. He may be willing to go into the depths of some Flood infested ship to retrieve her, but trust me when I say he would gladly go into the pits of Hell to retrieve you if he had too. You're the reason he fights. To see you again is his reason for carrying on no matter the cost. You're his aide to help him take down brutes like that,"

As if on cue, the second Scarab exploded in a fiery show of bright blue light and purple shrapnel, the remaining Covenant forces scattering across the snowy plains as Daniel's words slowly sunk in.

This was why 068 was such a mystery to me. One minute he was a complete bastard, the next he speaks with such sincerity that I find it hard to believe he'd just make it up.

Spartans can't love though. I know that. But Daniel says they can.

Who should I believe? The cloned brain of the Doctor that created Spartans, or a Spartan who I completely despise most of the time?

"_Commander Keyes?"_

The sound of my Spartan's voice over the radio snaps me out of my thoughts, mild irritation arising once more as an amused 068 returns to his seat, "Yes Chief I hear you,"

"_Both Scarabs are down Ma'am. Minimal casualties. We're picking off the last of the stragglers,"_

"Very good," I nod to myself as I watch a military green Phantom fly down low to the entrance to the Ark's Control Room, "Head up to the Ramp Chief, The Arbiter will be waiting for you there. The fate of

the War rests with you now,"

"_The Flood scales the citadel's far wall," _The Arbiter's voice was laced with venom as he joined the conversation,_ "Activate this bridge Oracle. The Prophet will die by my hands Commander, Not theirs,"_

"Understood Arbiter. Chief, you know what to do,"

"_Roger that Ma'am,"_

I sighed as I clicked off the radio, settling back in my chair as I gazed out over the quiet battlefield.

"What is it?"

I glanced back at 068, just long enough to see the concern that filled his eyes, before turning my attention back to the Ark control room as a bright line of blue bridged the canyon.

"I just have a funny feeling," my features creased into a frown as I watched two blotches run top speed across the bridge and into the installation, "Like I'm never going to see him again,"

"_My faithful. Stand firm,"_

My eyes widened as the radio suddenly came to life once more, Truth's tired drawling voice sending Goosebumps across my skin at him ominous tone.

"_Though our enemies crowd around us, we tread the blessed path. In a moment I will light the rings, and all who believe, shall be saved,"_

I gave the Spartan another look, this time of worry as he reached down for his helmet, the hiss of the pressure seal filling my ears as I opened the channel to John.

"Chief, how close are you?"

There was a strangled cry of a Brute on the other end, followed by the sound of a shotgun and plasma fire.

After a brief moment of silence, John's words filled my heart with dread.

"_Not close enough,"_

—

* * *

><p><p>

Okay, explanation time.

One of the reason it's taken me so long to update this is that I'm in the middle of a new Halo story, currently under the title of The Lost Spartan (I'm probably going to change it)

> Daniel-068 is the protagonist for this story, but his part is

completely different to his role in this fic. His personality and history up to Halo 3 however, is the same. Like the story says, he's a black sheep of the Spartans, due to the fact he's...from a different background than the others (Let's just say he wasn't abducted and leave it at that). I guess I put Dan in because I wanted to see how people would react to a Spartan that isn't really considered normal by Spartan standards. Anyway, I felt I should explain his being there. Next chapter you'll see Charlatan Forge (A friend came up with it because he sees the monitors in Forge mode as cheaters) and what her personality is like.<p>

Anyway, please R&R, as reviews are always appreciated.

Thanks for reading

Dearing

4. JohnMiranda

If there's one thing I hate, it's leaving a story unfinished. When I first started writing, I swore that I would see it through to the end. but in truth, I realise that it's not always possible. Sometimes you just lose interest in the subject, other times you just find something else to write about. I haven't updated this fic since October, and for that I'm sorry. The hype I got after completing Halo 3 is now all but dried up, and this chapter is proof of that.

This was originally part of a much longer unfinished chapter, but I just felt I should upload something to let you know I haven't given up on it. I will finish this fic. It just might take some time is all.

In the mean time, I hope you enjoy this, as short as it is. And I'll try to update as soon as I'm happy with the end result of the next chapter.

enjoy

Dearing

* * *

><p><p>

JOHN/MIRANDA

"Not close enough,"

I heard nothing but silence across my radio as I stared up the dominating shaft, my eyes slowly going over the prone form of the Jump pack Brute that had so unfortunately tried to surprise us by falling down the shaft.

"_I see," _Another short pause followed, a few muffled sounds indicating my Commander had covered the mic and was talking to Daniel.

Never a good sign.

"_Chief, 068 and myself have agreed to take on Truth. We'll head up to the top of the tower in the Pelican. You and the Arbiter get up here as quickly as possible understand?"_

"Don't be foolish Commander," The Arbiter's tone caused me to flinch slightly in anger, like he was scolding a small child, "The Prophet will be heavily guarded by the most powerful of the Brutes under his command. Such an attack would be suicide for a mere human, even if she _was_ accompanied by a Spartan,"

"_While your concern is touching, we're running out of options. Truth obviously has a human up there with him. Can you tell who it is?"_

"Yeah," I looked grimly at the screen in front of me, my friend and comrade held tight in some Brute bastard's clutches, "Johnson,"

"_Then we have a few more minutes at least. Nevertheless, this is the best course of action we have. Who knows, maybe I'll crush them all under the ship without even breaking a sweat,"_

"Ma'am, with respect, I agree with The Arbiter," As much as I hated to admit it, "Getting to Truth will be a nightmare in itself, even for us. And if you get killedâ€¦" I let the thought hang in the air, my own mind not even wanting to think about such a subject, "Iâ€¦It would be a serious morale dampener. Johnson is strong willed. He won't be forced to do anything he doesn't want too,"

Did I just stutter?

More silence dominated the radio, the only sound coming from the Elite as he clicked his mandibles, eager to return to the fight.

"_I'm sorry John,"_ Her voice seemed so sad, "_But we've run out of options. Johnson won't hold out for ever. We can't take that chance. Get up there as quickly as possible. Keyes out,"_

"Commander?" Only the click of a channel being terminated met my ears, "Commander? Commander Keyes come in. Miranda!"

My heart almost stopped as my superior's first name escaped my lips, my eyes wide with shock at the event.

I just called a superior by her first name. I'd never done that before. It had always seemed soâ€¦alien to me. Higher ranks were always Sirs and Ma'ams, or at least their rank.

They were never called by their first name. Especially by a Spartan.

"I will give your Commander this, she does have exceptional spirit," The Arbiter sighed heavily as he activated the lift, "Had she been born to parents of the Sangheili, she would of made a fine warrior,"

I didn't reply as my eyes graced over the dead brute at my feet, It's

jump pack smoking slightly from the pounding it had recently taken.

With a kick and a heave the entire pack came loose from the body.

"What are you doing?" The Arbiter gave me a curious look as I hefted the object over my shoulder, my gold visor turning to the shaft above.

"Finding a quicker way up," I braced myself as the pack began to thrum as it powered up, "Get up there as quickly as you can. I'll try and save Truth for you, but no promises,"

"What you're doing is suicide, even for you," The elite's eyes narrowed, "With both of us, we may have a chance, but by yourselfâ€¦you don't even know if this shoddy equipment will get you even half way up this shaft!"

"I won't let her die," I gave my comrade a death glare behind my visor, "And I just know she will if she tries this stupid stunt, even with Daniel's help. Get up there as fast as you can, we'll meet you there,"

His comment was blotted out by the scream of the jump pack's engines as it sent an occupant much lighter than it usually held far up the shaft at break neck speed, the walls of the shaft blurring as I headed up into battle once more.

Back to see her waiting face once more.

* * *

>I resisted the urge to vomit as the Pelican ground to a halt bare inches from the cloudy abyss below, my vision hazed and fuzzy as I staggered into the blood tray, ignoring a dazed 068's comment on women drivers as I fished a shotgun from the rack and jumped into the fray.<p><p>

"Johnson!" I unloaded a round into the skull of a nearby Brute as I focused on the battered Sergeant, "Sound off!"

"Get out of here," my friend coughed up blood onto the shiny floor, "Now dammit!"

"I didn't come all the way up here just to leave," I scowled at him darkly as I picked another of the advancing Brutes.

"You delay the inevitable," I scowled darkly as Truth's voice seemed to fill the control room "One of you will light the rings," In desperation to fend off the attackers, I quickly drew my pistol from it's holster, two of the armoured apes hesitating as they found themselves looking down gun barrels, "You cannot hope to kill them all,"

The shotgun slowly lowered as I brought the pistol in close, examining the straight lines and engraved serial number as my last case scenario came to my mind.

"You're right,"

"Do it," I slowly raised the pistol to Johnson's head, his eyes focused, features grim, "First meâ€|.then you,"

This was the only way. I was out of options. Daniel could always fight his way out of here, no need to kill off a dying breed. And Johnâ€|

Johnâ€|

He could go on without me. He didn't need me anyway. He was always the one protecting me, never the other way around. All I really regretted was that promiseâ€|and that I'd never be able to fulfil it.

"Do it," I could feel my hand quake around the firearm as I stared into Johnson's hollow eyes, "NOW!!!"

A shot suddenly rang out across the control room, followed by a strangled alien cry coming directly from behind me.

Looking over my shoulder, I realised just how close to death I had actually been.

Truth lay crouched on the floor, barely a metre or two behind me, cradling his right hand as purple blood oozed between his thin fingers and onto the smoking spiker at his knees.

"Leaveâ€|herâ€|alone,"

Despite the horrific circumstances we found ourselves I couldn't help but smile as relief coursed through my veins.

A Spartan, my Spartan, stood tall and firm against the light bridge behind him, his shotgun still smoking from recent fire, radiating an anger that I had never felt from him before.

That relief soon faded as I saw what scuttled around his feet.

Flood, hundreds upon thousands of infection forms swarmed around his feet like the way a river flows around a rock, all apparently oblivious to the green giant as many fell over the edge of the platform in their hurry to corner the wary Brutes.

"Kill them!" My eyes snapped to Truth as he staggered away from the scene, "Kill them all! And bring me the hand of the Demon!"

The wind was suddenly knocked out of my lungs as Daniel jumped out of no where and tackled me to the ground.

The last thing I heard was Johnson's pain ridden scream before the platform dissolved into chaos.

5. JohnMiranda II

Another chapter...at last. Sorry it's taking so long. a bit of a warning her though, everyone's a bit OOC here. just a little bit.

Also, a little more info about my original character, Daniel-068, and why he's such a black sheep.

Enjoy.

* * *

><p>JOHNMIRANDA**

The Control room was ablaze with plasma fire as I ducked behind the control panel as Daniel dragged a squirming Keyes behind our make shift barricade, one hand subconsciously throwing out deployable cover as the Brutes continued to blast anything that moved.

"You okay?"

"Yeah," A small groan came over my helmet's speakers as my brother in arms painfully removed one of many blackened spikes embedded in his back, "Peachy. The Commander's okay too,"

"Johnson?"

"He's still alive!" I don't think I'd ever seen Miranda thrash so much in her life, "We have to get to him before those things do!"

"Easy Commander," I felt something twinge inside me as Daniel's arms came tighter around Miranda's waist, "It was either you or the Sergeant, and we still need you if we're going to finish this fight. Speaking of which," he seemed to glare at me as Keyes continued to strain, "You made nice with The Flood? Are you nuts!?"

"It's not really making nice," I scowled as Miranda seemed to be losing her energy, "It's more doing something for mutual benefit,"

"Yeah, well call it what you want, they're still going to want to eat us once their done with the Brutes," As though to elaborate, an organic tearing sound, accompanied by a pitiful whimper, sounded close by, "Any ideas?"

Looking around it was clear we didn't have much in the way of weaponry. Just a few grenades, a SMG and magazines, two shotguns and a pistol.

A quick glance over my shoulder however, gave me an idea.

"What about the Pelican?"

"What _about _the Pelican?"

"It's drive plasma. If we get the engines to leak their fuel, we can use it to detonate the ship,"

"You want to blow up the Pelican?"

I stared at him quietly for a second, a part of me wondering how my comrade couldn't understand my way of thinking.

"Yes. Is there a problem with that?"

"No no, just thought I'd make sure," the Spartan fished his SMG from his thigh as Miranda seemed to give up entirely, slumping hard from exhaustion against Daniel's shoulder, "You do realise we're probably gonna fry the Sergeant in the process right?"

Uneasily, I looked over our make shift cover at Johnson's prone form, lying near one of the support struts.

He was still breathing, despite the dozen odd spikes jutting out of his chest, still alive, barely. As I watched him, he slowly raised his eyes to meet mine, a lopsided grin crossing his face as he gave me a weary thumbs up. When he finally spoke his voice was strained and weak, but still loud enough to be head clear across the control room.

"Send me out with a bang Chief! I'm not gonna be food for these little buggers!"

I nodded grimly as I ducked behind the panel once more, turning my head towards Daniel as he primed his weapon.

"Ready?"

"Go for it,"

Without even looking and with one arm still held tightly around the Commander, Daniel hefted the SMG behind his head and over the control panel, a hailstorm of armour piercing bullets spraying across the field, puncturing holes in the Pelican's fuel tank and anything else that got in the way.

Angry orange plasma gushed out across the floor as the machine gun died with a hiss, some of the remaining brutes crying out in agony as the dangerous substance burned at their feet, the infection forms bursting if they got to near.

Not that any of them would survive the next few seconds any way.

The world around us seemed to go silent as I flicked the pin from a frag grenade with my thumb, the single click of the key falling away from the explosive the only sound in my ears as I lobbed it over the cover and into the pool of plasma, my body subconsciously moving over Miranda and Daniel as my brother gently shielded her head.

Double Spartan protection. Lucky her.

The tiny device bounced across the floor amidst the chaos, one click, two before finally exploding in the very centre of the plasma ridden platform.

With a roar the volatile fuel turned into a sea of flame, the orange flares spreading out across the floor and unstoppable speed.

The Pelican exploded in a fiery display of orange and reds, the resulting blast causing the entire platform to shudder and quake as Brutes were sent flying into the misty abyss below, Infection forms popping under the extreme heat.

Soon, it was over before it ever really began. The flames died down

in a matter of seconds, the remains of the Pelican falling away from the blackened platform as an eerie silence fell over the area.

Gingerly, I slowly peaked over the edge of the ash covered console, the deployable cover having been completely fried in the blast, my eyes taking in the scene before me.

Johnson's body now lay prone and silent near his support strut, his hands having come around the beam as though to insure he didn't fall with the rest of the Brutes. His skin was seared and burned, almost to the point of being unrecognisable, his marine standard armour almost clinging to his charred body as his remains slumped to the ground.

Truth however, seemed to be only marginally better.

His skin had completely burned away in some places, purple blood oozing from his wounds as he struggled up towards the blackened console. His robes hung in rags around him as he tried to stand on his skeletal legs, only to fall back down again, mere inches away from the floating controls.

"Can't you see Demon?" The prophet seemed to gaze at my through shrouded eyes as Daniel helped Miranda to her feet, "The moment of salvation is at hand?"

"I doubt it," I slowly walked around the edge of the console, "It won't last you know,"

Truth's eyes narrowed as I pressed my hand against the floating image, feeling only a slight resistance beneath my hand as the lit rings before me suddenly died out.

"You can't do this!" his burned hand grabbed onto my leg, clawing his way up my body towards my neck, "My feet tread the path! I SHALL become a god!"

His body was weak, but his grip was strong, despite my best attempts to remove him, his hands finally found their way around my neck.

"I AM TRUTH!!!" With all his might he bellowed his last words to the sky, his hands not strong enough to squeeze the life out of me, "THE VOICE OF THE COVENANT!!!"

A single pistol shot echoed around the cavernous room, purple blood splattering across my visor as the Prophet's body fell to the floor with a dull thud.

"If that's the caseâ€¦you need to shut up,"

I gave my comrade a deadpan expression as I offhandedly wiped the gore from my faceplate, "You know Arbiter isn't going to like the fact you killed Truth right?"

Daniel shrugged as he steadied Miranda as she stumbled slightly, no doubt still recovering from the shock of the blast.

"He can chuck the body out the window if he like. I don't mind if he takes the credit," he suddenly turned towards the light bridge as

Miranda shook his aid off her, "Speak of the devil. Kinda late to the party aren't you?"

I glanced the Arbiter's way as he stumbled towards us, his hands devoid of weaponry, his helmet falling away with a clunk as he shook his head violently as though to clear his vision.

Something wasn't right.

"You okay?" I was surprised at the concern laced in my voice. I didn't particularly like Arbiter, but the way he walked; stumbling haphazardly, his eyes faded and unfocused, it just didn't seem right to me.

Miranda's eyes suddenly widened as she watched the Arbiter's approach, a hand going to her mouth as she looked like she was about to be sick,

"Oh my God,"

Bubbling and rippling, Flood spores started to erupt over the Elite's body, his Arbiter Armour falling away as the fasteners unlatched from the changing body they had once clung too.

"Now the gate has been unlatched, headstones pushed aside," The alien's voice wasn't his own. All I could do was stare as the arbiter's body convulsed and changed for the worst before my eyes, "corpses shift and offer room, a fate you must abide!"

"John! Shoot him!" Miranda's voice penetrated my thoughts, "You have to shoot him now!"

My reactions kicking in, I knew she was right. Almost automatically, I felt my hands yank the shotgun from my back, levelling the barrel at my comrade's chest as a cluster of sensor stalks burst through his grey skin.

The gun went off.

The Arbiter spun from the impact.

Thenâ€¦silence.

* * *

>"Ah, faithful shotgun," I scowled at the lax tone of Daniel's voice as I walked over to close the Arbiter's eyes, "Is there anything you can't do?" <p>"Have some respect for the dead," there was a slight clack of armour against armour as John thwarted his brother round the shoulder, "This isn't the way he would of wanted it,"
 "Sorry," 068's voice became sober once more, "It's justâ€¦first you get turned into Flood food, then you get shot by your alliesâ€¦"

"We should bury them,"

A short pause followed this announcement. I turned to face the Spartans as they gave each other what appeared to be uneasy glances (It's hard to tell when they're wearing helmets).

"Ma'amâ€¦how exactly would you like that done?" John spoke first, his

voice surprisingly hesitant and uncomfortable, "We can't exactly dig a hole and push them in. And I don't think it would be very ceremonial to drop them over the side,"

If the situation hadn't been so grim, I might of smiled at the thought of an elite being shoved into the cloudy abyss below, his limbs flying everywhere as he disappeared into the mist, dead and lifeless.

"There has to be something we can do," I gazed over John's shoulder at Johnson's charred remains, "Anything. We can't just leave them here,"

"What about this?"

I glanced at Daniel as he fished something from his belt; a peculiar cylinder, with a burning orange liquid held tight within it's transparent confines.

"What is it?"

> "Some kind of Incendiary grenade. I took it off a brute in Voi and never had a chance to use it," The Spartan tossed the object in the air, catching it second later with one hand, "Only got one though, but if we put them close together, this will probably give them a decent burial. You knowâ€|Viking style,"<p>

"Do we have time?"

John glanced towards the light Bridge, his shoulders tensing slightly as he no doubt picked a horde of Flood forms of all shapes and sizes at the are end of the 'corridor'. Without a word he walked over to the energy barrier, awkwardly kneeling down beside it and picking up the entire generator active and all, staggering slightly across to the bridge, before placing it directly in the centre.

"We do now,"

* * *

>"Do you think that's going to be close enough?" <p>"It's as close as I'm going to get them,"<p>

"I think we can get them closer. Maybe they could hug each otherâ€|"

"Daniel justâ€|throw the grenade,"

I cast my comrade a dangerous glance across the top of Miranda's head, my brother in arms in turn giving me a wary look as he seemed almost reluctant to throw the grenade.

"I think we should say something though," I felt my eyes widen slightly at his words, "I meanâ€|they're dead. If we're going to bury themâ€|might as well do it properly,"

"What do you suggest we say Spartan?" Miranda inclined her head up to gaze into Daniel's faceplate, "We better make it brief, the Flood will be on us soon,"

Daniel lowered his chin to his chest in thought for a moment, my own

mind wondering exactly what you could say about a human and a Elite that until a few months ago had been bitter enemies. I wasn't even sure how Arbiter's species honoured their dead. Was it anything like ours? Or was it completely different?

"How about a poem?" I don't know if my eyebrows could of gone any higher at his suggestion, "Just a short one mind. And I might have to adapt it a bit butâ€¦"

He trailed off as something of a intrigued smile graced the Commander's features, a single small hand indicating to our fallen comrades, as though he was supposed to be speaking to them, not her.

Nodding with reassurance, my brother set his shoulders back, his head straight, and began to recite something I never expected of him.

"They went with songs to the battle, they were youngâ€¦ish.

Straight of limb, true of eyes, steady and aglow.

They were staunch to the end against odds uncounted,

They fell with their faces to the foe.

They shall grow not old, as we that are left grow old:

Age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn.

And at the going down of the sun, and in the morning,

We will remember them, lest we forget,"

The grenade fell from his outstretched hand, a the liquid spilling out and engulfing my friend and my former enemy, the silence blotted out by the sound of the flames and the scuttling of infection forms as they scurried ever closer.

In a matter of minutes, they were gone, only a fine ash left in their wake, the powdery residue soon blown completely off the platform by the calm winds.

"Where did you hear that?" Miranda found her voice as she stared at my fellow Spartan, a look of amazement across her stunned face.

"Ode to Remembrance," even without looking, I could tell Daniel smiled fondly just by the sound of his voice, "The second Sunday of November, 2032. Kelly was home with a leg injury, and managed to get me out of the freezer while she recovered. She thought it would be nice to remember the fallen,"

Just like Kelly to do that for Daniel. The two had been close since the day they met. She had been the first to accept him for who he was; not a specially picked candidate that had been taken from his or her home to fight fir the UNSC, but a discarded son of a pirate from my hometown, who escaped by stowing away on Doctor Halsey's shuttle, and impressed her in his attempt to escape from the base following his discovery. (Considering he was six years old, the fact he managed to outwit hardened marines with a pistol and flash bangs, I think I'd

be impressed too). She was the first to see that he was just like us, the only reason he was never found before hand being that he never officially existed.

He must have been crushed when he was informed she was MIA.

A sudden spark against the shield generator brought me out of my thoughts as the first of the infections forms met up with the energy barrier, several hundred of the deadly virus tumbling into the abyss below as they fruitlessly tried to climb over it.

"We have to get out of here," it was a statement, not a suggestion.

"How?" I glanced at Daniel as he picked up Keyes' (admittedly charred) shotgun from the platform as he readied himself for an inevitable battle, "we blew up the pelican, the only way out is through a field of human eating monsters. And what about the Commander? We might survive, but she doesn't even have any armour. She's going to be a walking buffet for those infection forms,"

I scowled as my comrade's words sunk in. There was no way I was going to let them get to her. Not now.

My eyes scanned the debris that littered the platform as the scuttling got louder and louder. There had to be something here we could use to at least give her some protection. Anything.

Then, I saw it.

Perfect.

"Put this on,"

"What?â€|hey!" Miranda gasped as I clamped the Arbiter's chest and back plate around her thin form, "What are youâ€|OW!!" the commander yelped as Daniel joined in the fray, snickering lightly as he forced the helmet, now devoid of it's neck piece, onto her head with a fist to the top of the cranium, "This feels weird,"

"It wasn't exactly designed to be worn by humans Ma'am," I could almost hear the grin in Daniel's voice, "I don't think the arms and legs are going to fit though, and the Ship Master's not gonna be happy when he finds out we just made the first human Arbiter,"

"He'll have to deal with it," I scowled as I picked off the small plates at the end of each arm until I was satisfied with the length, before strapping them to Miranda's limbs, "The shielding in this suit wasn't exactly designed for a human though, but it will give you some protection from the Flood,"

Miranda cast me a wary gaze.

"How do I know if the shield's working?"

The sound of shotgun rang out above the approaching bugs as radiant purple energy suddenly buzzed over most of the Commander's upper body, my superior yelping with surprise at the sudden discharge of a weapon in her direction, earning Daniel a dirty look from the both of

us.

"What?" the Spartan shrugged innocently as he dusted the last of the grim from his weapon, "I had to make sure it fired properly. Kills two birds with one stone,"

I never got a chance to reprimand him.

With a splutter and fizz, the barrier died as a Brute combat form smashed through it, infection forms pouring around it's rotting feet as several former marines jumped into the fray from above.

"We'll skip the court-martial this time Spartans," Miranda smiled as the nearest combat form's head exploded from a round from her pistol, "Let's just focus on getting out of here,"

"Roger that Madam Captain," Daniel's shotgun sent infections forms scattering, "Watch your step now,"

"John?" I snapped out of my concentration as my brother cleared the path ahead, the pressure Miranda's hand on my arm feeling strangely comforting as she looked up at me with concern, "You still with us?"

I didn't reply for a moment, my eyes trained on a adventurous little infection form that scurried towards us, only to meet an untimely end with the sole of my boot.

"To the very end Ma'am. I'm with you 'til the very end,"

* * *

>imaginary cookie to the guy that sees the Halo 1 reference.
<p>Nearly done, either one or two more chapters to go. the deciding vote is whether I decide to move onto the High Charity, or I simply jump ahead to the big chase scene at the end. and to be honest, I leaning towards the chase scene.<p>

It's not like I enjoy jumping from place to place in the plot, but the fact is most of my inspiration has dried up for this fic, and I would rather finish it well then not finish it at all (Ala The Matter of choice, which I've been meaning to finish for almost a year now)

So yeah, chances are I'll just skip to the end, with a little explanation to what happened at the control room, the Chief's reunion with Cortana and so on. Maybe a short epilogue just to wrap it all up.

Last side-note, don't flame me because I killed Arbiter and Johnson. Johnson was going to die anyway, and I couldn't think of another way to get Miranda off the platform without getting infected.

Reviews and constructive criticism valued as always

Hope you enjoyed

Dearings

All I can say is: sorry.

>I had so many ideas for where I wanted this story to go. The reactions of the Elites to seeing Miranada, the reunion of John and Cortana, etc. But now...the muse is gone, and as hard as I tried, I just couldn't put my ideas down in words.
And so, I've decided to just finish this story as best as I can, because I think I owe everyone who reads my fics an ending (Because I hate it when I find a story unfinished.)

>So here we go. Just a short chase chapter today to say how they all got home, with the epilogue uploaded tomorrow or Monday.<p>

For what it's worth, I hope you enjoy.

* * *

><p>MIRANDADANIEL/JOHN**

I bit down hard on my tongue as the warthog swerved to avoid the oncoming Carrier form, the green bulbous creature exploding in a spray of infection forms as Daniel atop the turret unloaded several rounds through it's carrying sacs.

I'll say this about John's skills at the wheel, If we get out of this alive, I'm driving from now on.

The past few hours were something of a blur to me. The discovery of the new halo, the antagonising wait with Daniel as John ventured into the depths of the Flood invested High Charity alone for Cortana, (He wouldn't let me follow with only partial shielding, and ordered Daniel to protect me at all cost.) The seemingly never-ending waves of Flood as we fought together to reach the control room.

What weighed most heavily on my mind however, was the sacrifice of Forge.

She had been so brave. She piloted the Dawn to a nearby location for a quick and easy E-Vac. She helped finish off the last of the Flood around the control room's door.

But most importantly, she took a killing shot meant for Daniel from her rampant brother.

Her 'death' had hit the Spartan pretty hard. Never in my life had I seen a man fight so hard.

It was almostâ€|sad.

A growl from my left caused me to scowl darkly as a human combat form jumped onto the side of the warthog, the Arbiter's shields sparkling purple as I punched the former marine in his bed of tentacles in his chest, the Warthog crushing his remains with a satisfying squelch.

It was coming down, all of it.

Halo, the Ark. It was coming apart at the seams as the latter powered up to release the only deadly blast it would ever fire.

"Eighty percent charged," I winced hard as a support tore through the

ground ahead, John swerving to narrowly avoid the gaping hole as he conveyed Cortana's words to those who didn't have the AI lodged in their heads.

This was close, far too close for my liking. I wanted to scream, I wanted to throw up, but I refused to do either.

The chances of getting through this ordeal alive were getting smaller by the minute, but I'd be damned if the last image my two comrades had of me before death was a snivelling commander throwing up over the side of the car.

"Ninety percent charged. firing sequence initiated,"

"Cutting it a little close aren't we?" I cast Daniel a dark look as he gunned down all the Flood he could see, "Not trying to push you or anythingâ€|"

"Spartan, for once in your life, shut up and get your head down!" I snapped angrily as the Dawn slowly loomed ahead, "This is going to be messy!"

>Daniel didn't need telling twice.<p>

I felt my stomach drop as the warthog grabbed air, the wheels spinning wildly as the launch bay dominated my view.

The front wheels hit steel, the hog capsized.

The last thing I felt was the sensation of flight before the world went dark with a crack.

* * *

><p>"And here I was thinking it was just the women,"<p>

I groaned heavily as I tasted blood in my mouth, my mind forcing me to swallow it rather than let it stain the inside of my faceplate.

"John," I pressed a hand to the side of my helmet as I looked up towards the back of the Launch Bay, "You okay?"

"The Commander's out cold," I couldn't help but smile at the sight of my comrade leaning over his friend amidst the destruction around us, "Alive, butâ€|"

"JOHN LOOK OUT!!"

I barely had time to cry out as a Scorpion broke free of its moorings as the ship pitched dangerously back, the Chief grabbing his girl by the back of her armour and hoisting her onto his shoulder, managing to vault over a pack of crates into the corridor beyond before the giant tank smashed into the bulkhead.

"_Daniel, status!_"

"Great," I grinned as I dodged the falling warthog, "Nothing ends a good day then running for your life,"

I ran over to the nearby console as the crates shifted, John trying

his hardest to get through to me on the other side.

"Just forget about me," I could feel his helpless gaze through the small gap he'd made, "Throw me Cortana and get the Commander to the Bridge, she'll have the ship moving out by the time you get there!"

He paused for only a fraction of a second, before nodding in acceptance, yanking out the illuminated blue chip from the back of his helmet and tossing it expertly through the gap into my waiting hand.

"_You're a good solider Daniel. Don't ever let anyone say otherwise,"_

I merely nodded as his gold faceplate disappeared from view, a small sad sigh escaping my lips as I plugged Cortana into the console.

That's all I'd ever wanted to hear in my life. A bit of praise.

"Hold on tight," Cortana gazed up at me sternly as her avatar blinked onto the holotank, The ship banking more sharply as I sat down with my back against the console, facing the wall as the scorpion followed the warthog out the open hatch.

I felt tired. For the first time in days all I really wanted to do was sleep.

With the last of my strength I pulled her chip from it's slot as the Dawn's engines pushed us away from the growing light, the strange sensation of ice in my mind followed by a slight stab of pain causing a minor flinch as I insert the object into the slot in the base of my neck.

"I loved him you know," Cortana's voice sounded sad and unwanted in my ears as I turned off the outer speakers of my helmet, "I really did love him,"

"I know Miss Cortana," I smiled slightly as I leant my head back against the console, "And he knows it too. But he loves her too. And he can touch her, hold her"

"It's not fair,"

"Life's not fair," I closed my eyes with a short chuckle, "When I was six years old, I swore I saw an angel. She had brown hair and blue eyes, and was the second person after the good Doctor to offer me friendship. Then she just went away. Life's not fair Miss Cortana, but we just have live with what it throws at us,"

There was a short pause, my helmet tinting as a burning white light began to engulf the hanger.

"I think Kelly would be proud of you Daniel, wherever she is,"

I smiled as I let sleep overcome me.

"I'd like to think so,"

* * *

><p>I never liked the sight of an empty Bridge. A command centre of any kind should be manned at all times, that's what my intuition told me.<p>

But I knew really Cortana led us home.

Carrying Miranda bridal style, I slowly slumped awkwardly into the Captain's chair as I watched the portal home grow in the forward viewport, one hand subconsciously pushing the Arbiter's helmet of her dark-haired head as I turned my gaze to her pale face.

She groaned as she stirred from the motion, green eyes staring up at me curiously.

"Are we home?"

"Not yet," I shook my head, "A few more minutes, I promise,"

She frowned again, turning her gaze to the portal ahead.

"We're not going to make it,"

"We'll make it,"

She turned back to me, "How can you be sure?"

"Just trust me,"

She smiled slightly, before shifting my embrace, letting her head rest gently against my shoulder.

"It's funny," she closed her eyes again with a sigh, "I trust you more than I've trusted anyone under my commandâ€|but I've never even seen your face,"

I wasn't entirely sure how to respond to that. Surely she's seen me without my helmet before?

A mental account of the times we'd been together tells me otherwise.

Slowly, awkwardly, I brought my hand out from under her knees to place it protectively around her head, the prow of the Dawn entering the portal home as I held her tight.

"When we get out of this," my voice was barely a murmur, but feels incredibly loud in my ears as the world around us seemed to hold it's breath, "I'd be more than happy to show you,"

She looked up at me quietly, before a small grateful smile crossed her lips as the world went white.

* * *

><p>Definitely not the best chapter. I think the epilogues better though.<p>

Again, I'm really sorry that I let you all down on this, but I hope you'll enjoy these last few chapters anyway

Dearing

7. MirandaDaniel

Well, here it is. Last chapter ladies and gents. In my humble opinion, it could of been better, and it's a bit too happy endish for a Halo fic, but I said I would finish it, and here it is. I just wish my muse could of lasted longer...

that said, I still hope you enjoy this last chapter.

Last note: I've bended the rules of Halo canon a bit for this last chapter, so if you do review, don't point it out please, because I already know

* * *

><p>EPILOGUE

MIRANDA/DANIEL

"For us, the storm has passed. The war is over. But let us never forget those who journeyed into the howling dark and did not return. For their decision required courage beyond measure sacrifice, and unshakable conviction that their fight; our fight, was elsewhere,"

It was a surprisingly small ceremony, comprised mostly of the marines that that had returned from the Ark, the soldiers that had survived Voi and the Covenant invasion, as well as the Elite Shipmaster with the unpronounceable name, Admiral Hood, and of course, myself and John.

"As we start to rebuild, this hillside will remain barren, a memorial to heroes fallen. They ennobled all of us, and they shall not be forgotten,"

I closed my eyes as the last words of the Admiral's speech were lost to the African winds, the sound of the three volley salute echoing among the mountains as I thought back to trip home. The heated re-entry, the splash down in Arctic oceanâ€|the discovery that Daniel and Cortana were missing, along with the entire rear end of the Dawn.

He may have been a bastard from time to time, but stillâ€|I was glad to have known him. He'd shown me a side to Spartans I'd never even consideredâ€|a side to John that I never realised existed.

Speaking of which.

I blinked my eyes open as I head the crunch of MJOLNIR boots against dirt as my Spartan walked over to the Shipmaster, the Elite cocking his head to one side as they met.

"I remember how this war started," his voice was cold, yet calm, "What your kind did to ours. I can't forgive you, I don't think many

of my race ever will. Butâ€¦" he held out a gloved hand, "I want to sayâ€¦thanks, for standing by us to the end,"

The Shipmaster stared down at the offered limb, before taking it with his own clawed appendage.

"You have my condolences on the loss of your comrade," The Elite turned towards the sunset thoughtfully, "I've seen your kind fight. It's hard to believe such a warrior is gone,"

If I didn't know better, I would have paid good money that John was smirking under his faceplate.

"Were it so easy,"

The Elite turned back to the Spartan with what could only be described as a grin.

"Indeed,"

"What will you do now?"

"I thinkâ€¦I would like to see my world again. Things look different without the Prophets' lies clouding my vision. I would like to knowâ€¦that it is safe,"

"I'm sure it is," John cuffed the Elite by the shoulder, "You've fought to make it safe. Why shouldn't it be now?"

The Shipmaster grunted in agreement before walking towards the awaiting Phantom, giving me a nod of farewell as John headed up to the memorial.

My curiosity getting the better of me, I followed him up to the slab of metal as the sound of scraping was heard, the Spartan standing back to admire his work as I came up beside him, my eyebrows raised at the numbers scratched into the onyx plating, the insignia of a Petty Officer First class taped beside it.

068.

"I'm sure he'd like that," he looked down at me as I smiled up at him, "What about his medal?"

John gazed down at the bronze star in his hand, a thumb going over it's dull service as he clenched it into his fist.

"I'll think I'll hold onto it for him," the hand fell to his side as he walked away from the memorial to watch the sun set, "He'll probably want to see the only medal he's ever been awarded for himself when he gets back,"

An eyebrow raised as I regarded him with surprise.

"Do you really think he's still out there?"

"When he was six years old, he almost escaped the Reach training facilities with nothing but a stolen pistol and flash bangs," He nodded quickly, "An exploding Halo isn't going to keep him down for long. And with Cortana on his sideâ€¦shouldn't be too

long,"

"Soâ€|what are you going to do while you wait?"

He turned to me suddenly, "I thought you'd know,"
>"Hm?"<p>

"You said, back in Voi, that you were going to help me find something to do that didn't include anything along the lines of a SMG. You gave me your word,"

>I smiled slightly as I cocked my head to one side.<p>

"I did say that didn't I? But _I _seem to remember you telling me if we got home, you'd take that helmet off,"

"Seems a fair trade,"

"Yes it does,"

I felt my breath catch in my throat as he slowly reach for the helmet's sides, a flash of worry and fear flashing through my mind as the pressure seal broke with a hiss.

What if he was horribly scarred? What if he was old and haggard? Another thought crossed my mind: was I really this shallow?

As he pulled the emerald helmet away however, my fears suddenly disappeared.

Through the wonders of cryo-sleep technology, a man in his early thirties gazed down at me with calm hazel eyes, dark brown hair, longer then regulation length due to there being a lack of time for a haircut, falling around his pale strong face.

He took my silence uncomfortably, "Not what you were expecting Ma'am?"

"I wasn't expecting anything really," I smiled embarrassedly at his confusion, "I meanâ€|you look fine,"

"Thank you Ma'am,"

"Miranda, John," His eyebrows rise up into his hairline, "You and meâ€|we've been through a lot together andâ€|" I looped a arm through his, "I think we've gone beyond ranks and last names,"

He frowned down at me, before casting his gaze towards the dying rays.

"Iâ€|I'm not very good at this. Fighting is all I've ever known. Relationships, attractionâ€|I was never supposed to know about these things. I was supposed to be a weapon of war, nothing more nothing less,"

I didn't think I'd ever seen a man look so unsure of himself, much less a Spartan of all people. He was like a child, a youngster who had just stepped out of the house where he grew up and saw the real world for the first time.

I had to ratify that.

Slowly and carefully, I allowed my arm to worm it's way round to his back, turning to face him fully as I hugged him gently around his middle. For a moment he only tensed up, his natural instincts telling him to push me away, but then his human side took over.

His arms came clumsily around my shoulders, his large hands careful not to rest too heavily against me as I rested my head against his chest.

"Well then," I smile against his armour, "I'm willing to teach, if you're willing to learn,"

I look up at him as he looks down at me, my heart fluttering against my chest as his small, but content smile imprinted itself in my memories for all eternity.

"I'd like that," Miranda. I'd like that a lot,"

* * *

><p>It was so warm.<p>

Even through MJOLNIR, I could feel the heat of a sun radiating throughout my suit, save for the coolness of earth against my back.

I immediately regretted opening my eyes; static scratching across my HUD as blood red warning signs clouded my vision.

At least I wasn't dead.

A shadow appeared through my graining vision, the rifle in it's hand dropping to the ground beside me with a thud as dark green grabbed the sides of my head and pulled until the pressure seal reluctantly gave up the helmet.

I frowned as my heavy hands clawed to retake my head piece, my fogged memory remembering the passenger still locked within it's confines.

"Give it back," I scowled up into the light, "Cortana,"

The shadow seems to speak, her voice dulled and muffled due to a slight concussion on my part. Another shadow joined her for a moment to stare at me, before being handed my helmet and taking off back the way it had come as the first blurred person kneels down beside me.

My vision slowly cleared as I felt a cool pressure against my face; colours filling the darkened form. Fuzzed lines becoming solid.

My eyes widened as recognition filled my senses.

Her hair was longer than I remembered, her face perhaps a little thinner. But even in the shadow of the remains of the Dawn, her eyes were still bright and blue, her un-armoured form just as lithe as the day we received our first set of armour.

No doubt she could still outrun any of us.

Slowly, achingly, I raised a hand of my own towards her, pushing a dark brown lock from the side of her face, just to make sure I'm not dreaming, my fingers trailing across her cheek as she smiled down at me caringly, like the day we first met, before all those augmentations and procedures made us who we were today.

When I finally spoke, my voice was harsh and croaked, but I didn't care, for I had found my angel once again.

"Helloâ€|Kelly,"

****THE END****

* * *

><p>Well, there you have it ladies and gents. the end of my first ever Halo fic. My one wish about this story was that it's muse had lasted longer, because I had a lot of great ideas to flesh out this fic from what originally was only supposed to be a oneshot.
Oh well, such is life I guess.

I'd like to thank everybody who reviewed this fic, as well as everyone who read it and enjoyed it. I hope this story was an enjoyable read, and who knows? Maybe my Halo muse will come back with the release of Halo Wars?

Thanks again for reading,

Dearing

End
file.